

KEEN COMPETITION HERE IS FACTOR IN LOW PRICES

Merchants Tell Why Richmond Is Less Hard Hit Than Other Cities by H. C. L.

OVERHEAD EXPENSES SMALL

Retailers Apply Sound Business Principles and Do Lot of Actual Work Themselves, Eliminating Many High-Priced Salesmen.

Merchants here were highly satisfied today with the report of United States Department of Commerce showing Richmond to be the city with the smallest increase in the cost of living in its class in the past year.

Keen competition, hard work, and application of sound business includes by the retail merchants, union with natural advantages of location and the positions given to Richmond's high status by one of the most representative business men here. Heading the list are E. G. Lewis, W. H. Schmid, and G. Lewis, Sam L. Heller and A. Clarke, Jr., who represent actually every retail business interest in the city, although a large portion of the state.

Here is what they say about the conditions in which Richmond is competing in the cost of living in the past two years:

Give Reasons for Low Prices.

There are several reasons why Richmond merchants can sell their garments cheaper than clothing of similar quality at other cities because of their wages," W. Fleet Kirk, resident of the Virginia Association of Retail Merchants, stated yesterday in reading a report of the Department of Labor on prices in Richmond.

One of them is that the Richmond merchants are not accustomed to sitting in their offices and employing high-priced salesmen to do their selling for them. They are on a door-to-door basis, and save a good deal of the overhead cost of selling goods by selling down on the floor of their stores.

"Overhead expenses in Richmond are not as great as in many other cities," said Mr. Kirk, "and even though Richmond cannot necessarily compete with cities of its class, merchants here also buy their goods more and save by turning to the general market rather than to dealers who do elsewhere. Then we close to the primary markets, which are less and transportation costs are lighter."

Heller Says It's Competition.

The communication continues: "Samuel Heller, president of the Richmond stores, Inc., Mr. Heller, like Mr. Kirk, was working on the floor of his store, and was seen advertising to visitors to his customers at some time when approached regarding the human nature of the business. He has human nature for one thing, but it doesn't seem to be competition. It is honest competition based on low overhead expenses, and the result is that the merchants and small goods dealers in Richmond have been able to sell their goods at a lower price than those in other cities. We have been able to do this because of the fact that

V. H. Schmid, president of Virginia Retail Merchants Association, directed us to consider long enough to examine it, but others have been lower than ours because retailers have been conservative, quiet and patriotic in dealing with the public. Heller declared he is sorry there are no merchants here since the beginning of the world war, and did not feel compelled to go to him, but has added considerably greatly." The spirit of 1917, he said, had made him want to help the Federal government and a single case of protecting him from investigations of the conduct of the merchants here, he said, would have been enough to get them to agree that Richmond was a better place. He referred the writer to the United States district attorney, Hon. M. Smith, to get further statement.

Speaks for Whole State.

In remarks filed spoke not only Richmond, but for Virginia. He said he had just completed a trip over the state, inspecting and investigating all of the organizations included in the Virginia Retail Merchants Association and found spirit of same everywhere.

V. A. Clarke, Jr., secretary of both State and the Richmond Retail Merchants Association, said of the matter that merchants are selling goods at a smaller margin of profit than elsewhere. He said that was nothing new, but had been recognized by merchants a long time, but that he was told to have the Federal government recognize it, for fear that the merchants here most acquainted with the local situation here is us. G. Lewis, president of the Richmond Retail Merchants Association, in his opinion has based observation of conditions and of constant contact with retail merchants here.

Merchants here tentatively agreed ago that they would not change their prices on goods to be consistent with the daily market, but in the market, at which they are purchased," he declares. For this reason, merchants here have sold goods the same again and again, and merchandise may only be replaced on their shelves as have been sold here at least in that could be purchased at the end of the season, market price on merchandise is cheaper anywhere else in a city of Richmond's class because the Richmond merchants have saved from a start in "honesty" with their cus-

tomers."

OVIETS WANT ARMISTICE

Russian Government Proposes Negotiations Between Japanese and Siberians.

Its Associated Press, LADIVOSTOK, May 15.—The Russian Soviet government has proposed armistice between the Japanese and Siberians, according to a dispatch from Irkutsk.

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